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NEWS RELEASE

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**HISTORICAL SOCIETY MARKS 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF SUPREME COURT
DECISION ON SCHOOL DESEGREGATION**

Brown Sisters Featured as Keynote Speakers

FRANKFORT, Ky. (March 24, 2004) – On Tuesday, March 30, Linda Brown Thompson and Cheryl Brown Thompson, daughters of Rev. Oliver Brown who was a plaintiff in *Brown v. Board of Education, Topeka, Kansas*, will be featured as keynote speakers for a symposium titled “Unfinished Business: School Desegregation in Kentucky.” This day-long program held at the Kentucky History Center in Frankfort, will examine the history and legacy of desegregation efforts in Kentucky. Marking the 50th anniversary of this historic Supreme Court decision, this event is sponsored by the Kentucky Historical Society and Oral History Commission in partnership with the Kentucky Department of Education, Kentucky Education Cabinet, Kentucky Commission on Human Rights, Kentucky Historical Society Foundation and the Kentucky State University Center of Excellence for the Study of Kentucky African Americans.

In 1951, Rev. Brown was one of the 13 families who sued the Topeka, Kansas, Board of Education challenging the laws that mandated separate schools for children based solely on race. The plaintiff's children were required to travel past and away from nearby schools to attend the four schools designated for African-Americans. This case was eventually combined with other NAACP cases from Delaware, Virginia, South Carolina and Washington, D.C., and became known as the *Oliver L. Brown v. the Board of Education of Topeka*. Today, the Brown sisters co-own an educational consulting firm and Henderson is

cofounder and executive director of the Brown Foundation for Education Equity, Excellence and Research. The sisters are appearing through DPK and Associates, Inc.

Also speaking in the afternoon session will be NAACP National Director of Education, Dr. John H. Jackson. At age 31, Jackson is the youngest director of education in the NAACP's 94-year history and has earned five higher education degrees. Jackson's primary responsibility is the direction and implementation of a national advocacy agenda, which focuses on closing the achievement gap.

Other speakers that will be participating in the day's event include:

- Gerald Smith, director of African-American Studies, University of Kentucky
- Blaine Hudson, acting dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, University of Louisville
- Beverly Watts, director of the Kentucky Commission on Human Rights
- John Hardin, associate professor of history, Western Kentucky University

Panelists who will share their personal stories include:

- James Howard, one of nine black students whose integration of Sturgis High in 1956 was met with violence resistance
- Louis Stout, the first African-American in the nation to head a state high school athletics association
- Doris Wilkinson, member of the freshman class of African-American students at the University of Kentucky in 1954
- Benitha Ellis, who headed the United Black Protective Parents organization, which formed in 1975 in response to busing for integration in Louisville/Jefferson County
- Suzy Post, the only white plaintiff in the lawsuit that resulted in the 1975 Jefferson County busing plan

"The purpose of the symposium is to examine the history and legacy of desegregation efforts in Kentucky and place that experience in a national context," says Kent Whitworth, director of the Kentucky Historical Society. "We are very pleased to have the Brown sisters, Dr. Jackson and other key individuals joining us to address the impact of this historic decision."

In 1998 the Kentucky Oral History Commission initiated the "Civil Rights Movement in Kentucky Oral History Project" to document the struggle to end legal segregation in the commonwealth. Included as part of this project is the March 30 symposium and the development of a Web site featuring:

- 300 hours of audio content
- 18 hours of video content
- More than 10,000 of electronic oral history transcriptions (all full-text searchable)

The Commission, a program of the Kentucky Historical Society, will introduce the new Web site at the symposium. Oral History Archivist, Doug Boyd commented, "The symposium can only offer the public a glimpse into the rich content of the civil rights project. Through this Web site teachers, students and the public will have easy access to the hundreds of stories in the civil rights project."

Advance registration is required for the symposium due to space limitations. For more information and admission costs for the event, call (502) 564-1792, ext. 4486 or visit the Web at <http://history.ky.gov/Programs/KOHC/brown.htm>.

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In 1998, the Kentucky Oral History Commission, which is administered by the Kentucky Historical Society, began a multi-year project called *Civil Rights Movement in Kentucky Oral History Project*. This project is a major statewide initiative developed to document, through oral history interviews, the struggle to end legal segregation in Kentucky between 1930 and 1975. To help advance the understanding of the history and legacy of the civil rights movement in Kentucky, the project's goal is to provide an extensive base of primary resources from which to develop educational programming to include video documentaries, curriculum materials, a symposium, a theatre performance piece presented at the Kentucky History Center and radio programs.

The Kentucky Historical Society, since 1836, has provided *connections to the past, perspective on the present and inspiration for the future*. KHS operates the Old State Capitol, Kentucky Military History Museum and its five-year-old headquarters, the Kentucky History Center. Since 1999, the \$30 million dollar History Center has welcomed almost **one million visitors**. For more information about the Kentucky Historical Society and its programs, visit the Web at <http://history.ky.gov> or call (502) 564-1792.